ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ON PSYCHIATRIC PATIENT ADMISSION PROCEDURES BY NURSES AT A NATIONAL TEACHING AND REFERRAL MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITAL IN KENYA

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Abstract:

Introduction: Mental illness is a global health crisis which results in significant morbidity and is a major factor that influences the social determinants of health of individuals, families, and communities. In Kenya, the Mental Health Act cap 248 (Laws of Kenya) prescribes procedures that must be followed in the admission of patients to a mental health hospital. This calls for the nurses to be skillful when handling the mentally ill patients at the OPD during admission. The aim of this study was to determine attitude and practice on admission procedures among nurses working at the National Teaching and Referral mental health Hospital.

Methods: This was a descriptive cross-sectional, with the National Teaching and Referral mental health Hospital being purposively selected. Systematic sampling was used to select the sample size of 132 nurses for the purposes of documenting participant’s attitude on admission process while purposive sampling was used to observe participants for the purposes of documenting the admission practices at the outpatient department. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to document the participants’ attitude whereas a checklist was used to document observations during the patient admission process. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 and presented in form of charts, tables, and narratives.

Findings: Majority of the respondents (67%) demonstrated a positive attitude in relation to handling mentally sick patients during admission. Various challenges to the implementation of the prescribed admission procedures were also identified by the respondents. Some 38 (29.7%) of the respondents cited inadequate staff per shift and suggested that the management should increase the number of staff per shift.

Recommendations: Measures to promote positive attitude by the nurses towards patient admission procedures should also be implemented. The study also recommends that the number of staff per shift should be increased in the OPD and the department expanded.

Keywords: Attitude, nurses, admission, psychiatric, patient, procedures
Introduction

Globally, reform of mental health care systems advocate for increased participation of a wide range of health care workers in providing services to people with mental disorders. Health-care professionals across all disciplines require increased skills to better equip them to recognize and manage mental illness, along with improved coordination of consumer of mental health services and increased community interest and involvement in mental health issues (Shaban, 2006). Nurses among other health care workers have a great role in the provision of the initial care of mentally ill patients, presenting in various outpatient departments (OPD). This calls for the nurses’ to have a positive attitude and expected skills when handling the mentally ill patients at the OPD, during admission.

However, at the national teaching and referral mental hospital, there are no documented studies in relation to health care worker’s abilities to follow the prescribed procedures when admitting mentally ill patients. This formed the basis for the researcher’s motivation to carry out this study on attitude and practice on admission procedures among nurses at the Mathari national teaching and referral hospital. The aim of this study was to determine attitude and practice on admission procedures among nurses working at the National Teaching and Referral mental health Hospital.

Methods

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study on the Nurses knowledge, attitude and practice on admission procedures at National Teaching and Referral hospital. The study involved interviewing nurses in the hospital.

The study was carried out in National teaching and referral Hospital, which is situated off Thika super highway opposite Muthaiga police station, about six Kilometers north of Nairobi City Centre. The hospital was established in 1910 by the colonial government. It has 200 nurses and a capacity of 700 beds, although the average occupancy is about 1500. The hospital has several wards which include five male wards, three female wards, an amenity ward and a drug rehabilitation center. MNTRH offers general outpatient services, dental services, and outpatient psychiatric services to the general public. The institution also has physiotherapy and occupational therapy departments, which are part of treatment for admitted patients. Other clinics include Maternal and child health, comprehensive care, child psychiatry and methadone clinics. The hospital has a civil wing for civil patients and a maximum security unit for mentally ill offenders who have committed capital offenses. The institution serves as a national referral hospital for patients with mental health conditions. Mathari Hospital offers clinical experience to both undergraduate and postgraduate Medical students from various universities in Kenya. The hospital is also a clinical experience center for both basic and posts basic students from Mid-level Medical training Colleges.

The study population was nurses at the Mathari National Teaching and Referral Hospital during the period of the study who were involved in direct care of psychiatric patients and had worked at Mathari National Teaching and Referral Hospital for more than
Using Fisher’s formulae, the sample was 384 nurses and adjusted to 132 nurses. Systematic random sampling was used where every 2nd nurse was sampled from nurses’ duty schedule. However, 4 nurses never returned the questionnaires; hence 128 of them were interviewed.

During data collection, the research assistants distributed questionnaires to the respondents and collected them back once they were filled. The research assistant cross checked the data collection tools to ensure that correct entries were performed. Data entry into the computer database was carried out by the data entry clerk and secured with a password. Raw data tools were put in a folder a stored in a lockable cabinet for reference purposes. Quantitative data from the respondents was entered into a computer and descriptive analysis computed using SPSS version 20. In respect to the qualitative data, themes arising from the analysis were recoded and analyzed accordingly with some of the reports being narrated. The outputs were presented in form of narratives, charts and tables.

Ethical clearance to collect data was obtained from Mount Kenya University Ethical Review Committee (ERC). The researcher also obtained permission from the management of the MNTRH. The researcher also ensured that the questionnaires were coded and no respondent’s name was entered during data collection. To collect data, all the respondents were requested to sign an informed consent after getting full information in relation to the study being conducted.

All information obtained during the study was treated with confidentiality, with the data being stored in a computer with a pass word.

The latter was only accessible to the researcher and the data entry clerk. For security purposes, the raw data questionnaires were stored in a lockable cabinet. Once the researcher completes the project, the findings will be disseminated to the management of MNTRH for the appropriate utilization.

Findings

Demographic characteristics

Respondents’ age: 50 (34.1%) of the respondents, were aged between 25 to 29 years, while 10 (7.8%) were aged below 25 years.

Respondents academic qualifications: Most of the respondents, 67 (52%) were diploma holders, while 5 (4%) were certificate holders. Most of the respondents, 102 (79.7%) had not undergone post basic Psychiatry nursing course.

Respondents working experience in years

Most of the respondents, 65 (50.8%) had worked for at least six years while 48 (37.5%) respondents had worked for four to six years, with 15 (11.7%) having worked for four to six years.

Respondents’ attitude towards admission procedures in a psychiatric unit

During the interview, 86 (67%) of the respondents said that nurses should inform patients/relatives on their rights during admission using written forms while 42 (33%) disagreed with this.
Responses on why nurses wouldn’t inform patient/relatives on their rights during admission

Table 1: Why nurses wouldn’t inform patient/relatives on their rights during admission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The patients have no insight to care about their rights</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses are too busy to use written forms</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its time wasting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s of no help</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the respondents who said that nurses should not inform patients/relatives on their rights using written forms, 20 (47.6%) said that the patients have no insight to care about their rights, 17 (40.5%) said that nurses are normally too busy to use written forms, 3 (7.1%) said that it was a time wasting exercise while 2 (4.8%) said that it is of no help.

Responses on whether implementation of standard admission procedures consumes a lot of time

When asked whether the implementation of standard admission procedures consumes a lot of time, 75 (58.6%) agreed while 53 (41.4%) disagreed (figure 11).

Responses on whether nurses must ensure that mentally sick patients are cleared of other medical illnesses

About 96 (75%) of the respondents agreed that mentally sick patients should be screened for other medical conditions before admission while 32 (25%) disagreed.

Why mentally sick patients should not be cleared of other medical illnesses

Among the respondents who said that mentally ill patients should not be investigated for other medical illnesses before admission, 18 (56.3%) said that this will not affect their management, 11 (34.4%) said that the other diseases can be managed together with the mental illness, while 3 (9.3%) said that nurses have no time to carry out such investigations during the admission process.
Table 2: Respondents’ opinion on why nurses should not screen mentally sick patients for other medical illnesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This will not affect the patient’s management</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental illness and other co-morbidities can be treated</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concurrently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses have no time to perform other investigations during</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patient admission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents’ Practices on Admission Procedures in a Psychiatric Unit

The nurses’ practice during admission was assessed by use of the various activities which must be carried out from the time the patient arrives at the psychiatric unit OPD until the patient is transferred to the ward for admission as shown in table 8 below. Eighty one (63.3%) of the respondents observed ensured that Med 614 and 615 forms were signed appropriately, 63(42.9%) ensured that a doctor was available during patient admission, while 33 (25.8%) of the respondents ensured that patients received stat doses of their medications at the OPD. Eighty five (66.4%) of the respondents ensured that right person applied for admission of voluntary patients, 96 (75%) of them ensured that right person applied for admission of involuntary patients, 20 (15.6%) ensured that all patients are escorted to the ward while 20 (15.6%) of the respondents explained to patient/guardian on the requirements before admission.

The study showed that most of the respondents, 34.1% were aged between 25 to 29 years. This was contrary to a study by Kumar et al (2011) on the knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities in psychiatric nursing in a selected psychiatric center associated with Swift Medical College, Jaipur which established that most of the respondents were above 30 years of age. The study findings also showed that most of the respondents were females (66%), which contradicted the study by Kumar et al (2011), whereby most of the respondents were males. In this current study, most of the respondents were diploma holders but in the study by Kumar et al (2011) majority of the respondents had a bachelor of science in nursing. Among the 128 respondents interviewed, only 20.3% of them had a post basic diploma in psychiatric nursing, a situation which could adversely affect the provision of quality care to the mentally sick patients, especially in relation to the utilization of standard admission procedures in the OPD.
Table 3: Respondents’ Practices on Admission Procedures in a Psychiatric Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse ensured that doctors signed Meds 614 and 615</td>
<td>63.3(81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse ensured that doctor was available during patient admission</td>
<td>49.2(63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse ensured that patients receive stat doses at the OPD</td>
<td>25.8(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse ensured that right person applied for admission of voluntary patients</td>
<td>66.4(85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse ensured that right person applied for admission of involuntary patient</td>
<td>75.0(96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse ensured that all patients are escorted to the ward</td>
<td>15.6(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse explained to patient/guardian on the requirements</td>
<td>15.6 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that most of the respondents, 50.8% had worked for at least six years explains why an equivalent number where either Nursing officers one or senior nursing officers. However, Kumar et al (2011) established that most of the respondents in the study had worked for less than five years.

The majority of the respondents 67% demonstrated a positive attitude in relation to handling mentally sick patients during admission, since they said that nurses should inform patients/relatives on their rights during admission using written forms. However, the rest of the respondents had various reasons why they should not provide the information to patients/relatives. Among the 43 respondents who said that there was no need of giving patients/relatives information using written forms, 48.8% of them said that the patients have no insight to care about their rights, 39.5% said that nurses are normally too busy to use written forms, 7% said that it was a time wasting exercise while 4.7% said that it will be of no help. This demonstrated a negative attitude of the respondents towards some aspects of the patient admission process. Similar results were realized in a study by Aydin et al, (2003) on the attitudes of hospital staff towards mentally ill patients in a teaching hospital in Turkey, which stated that nurses had a negative attitude towards mentally ill patients. Concerning the implementation of standard admission procedures, most of the respondents 58.6% said that it consumes a lot of time. This negative attitude could translate into a hindrance in the utilization of the prescribed admission procedures at the OPD. Seventy-five percent of the respondents...
agreed that mentally sick patients should be screened for other medical conditions before admission, which demonstrated a positive attitude towards the admission process. For the respondents who demonstrated negative attitude in this situation, 56.2% said that this will not affect their management, 34.4% said that the other diseases can be managed together with the mental illness, while 9.4% said that nurses have no time to carry out such investigations during the admission process.

The nurses’ practice during admission was assessed by use of the various activities which must be carried out from the time the patient arrives at the psychiatric unit OPD until the patient is transferred to the ward from the OPD. About 63.3% of the respondents observed ensured that when admitted involuntary patients, Med 614 and 615 forms were signed appropriately, which demonstrated the correct practice since these are the right forms according to the mental health Act cap 248. In the same respect, the respondents also ensured that the right persons applied for the admission of these patients. The mental health Act cap 248 stipulates that when admitting involuntary patients to a psychiatric unit, a guardian, parent or a police officer among other responsible persons may apply and fill the admission forms (National Council for Law Reporting, 2012). This positive practice was demonstrated by the same respondents.

When admitting patients to a psychiatric unit, the nurse must ensure that a doctor is available in the OPD. This good practice was demonstrated by 42.9% of the respondents who ensured that a doctor was available during patient admission. It is important for mentally ill patients to receive stat doses of antipsychotic drugs at the OPD during admission. However, only 25.8% of the respondents ensured that patients received stat doses of their medications at the OPD. During admission of voluntary patients, the patient fills med 613 forms while the doctor fills med 615, before admission. This right practice was performed by 66.4% of the respondents, who ensured that right person applied for admission of voluntary patients and the correct forms were filled appropriately. After completing the admission procedure, the nurse must ensure that he/ she escorts the patient to the ward for admission. The escorting nurse must also explain the admission requirements to the patient/ relatives/ guardians. However, this practice was only carried out by 15.6% of the respondents respectively.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The respondents’ attitude towards the admission procedures of patients in psychiatric units was varying. The majority of them demonstrated a positive attitude in relation to handling mentally sick patients during admission, although more than half of them said that the admission procedures consume a lot of time. Three-quarters of the respondents were in agreement that mentally sick patients should be screened for other medical conditions before admission.

Most of the respondents demonstrated good practices on the admission of mentally sick patients. However, it was observed that only about a quarter of the respondents ensured that the patients received stat doses of antipsychotic drugs at the OPD, with very few of them escorting the patients to the admitting wards.
The study findings also showed that there were challenges that barred the respondents from practicing the right admission procedures. The study recommends that the hospital management should ensure that most of the nurses who work in the institution have specialization in psychiatric nursing. Similarly, measures to promote positive attitude by the nurses towards patient admission procedures should be implemented.

References


